THE OCTAGON

A Journal of The American Institute of Architects

Architectural Service for Public Housing Projects

Papers by—

A. C. Shire, Technical Director, U. S. H. A.; J. Fletcher Lankton, Architect, Member of a local Housing Authority; Coleman Woodbury, Executive Director, N. A. H. O.; Carl Feiss, Associate in Architecture, Columbia University; and Walter R. McCornack, Chairman, Committee on Housing, A. I. A.

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FLASH!

Fifteenth International Congress of Architects Postponed

AS this number of The Octagon goes to press, announcement has been made that the Committee on Organization of the Fifteenth International Congress, on September 7, voted to postpone sine die the Congress scheduled to be held in Washington, D. C., the week beginning September 24, 1939.

This decision was reluctantly made after careful consideration of the unfavorable factors that have developed as a result of the state of war existing in European countries—conditions which make impossible the holding of a Congress that would be internationally representative.

A few of the foreign delegates are now in the United States; some are on the way; all will be cordially received at The Institute Convention.

The tentative program of the Convention, published in the July number of The Octagon, will be revised to include as many as possible of the special features that were being provided for the Congress, and the opportunity for meeting our foreign guests will not be lost.

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Architectural Service For Public Housing Projects

A SYMPOSIUM OF CRITICAL PAPERS

FOREWORD

THE large scale housing projects, being developed under the United States Housing Authority, constitute a new and important opportunity for the architectural profession. They constitute a challenge as well. They also involve problems and responsibilities for the members of the local housing authorities recently created to perform a new civic duty of municipal as well as of social significance.

It is important that both the architects and the housing authorities do a good job of it. It is inevitable that in each category the quality of performance will vary. It will be well, early in the game, to appraise results. There are already more than fifty projects under U.S.H.A. that have been draughted ready for contracts, a number of which are under construction and a few nearly ready for occupancy.

In this issue of THE OCTAGON (September, 1939) there are presented a group of papers reflecting the experience of persons directly involved, in one way or another, in this first series of U.S.H.A. projects. They are intended to be frank expressions of opinion of individuals. The Institute is not responsible for and does not endorse the opinions expressed. It publishes them in the interest of progress in the field of public housing.

In commenting upon the text which follows, Henry S. Churchill, Architect, said—

"As Consultant to the United States Housing Authority I have recently been in conferences in which the character of architectural services in the low-rent housing field has been discussed. I have been much disturbed by some of the things said and examples cited. As Chairman of National Association of Housing Officials Committee on Technical Aspects of Housing Administration I have heard similar things from members of local authorities. Thanks to The Institute's Committee on Housing—its chairman and vice-chairman—it is possible to present to the profession, in this number of THE OCTAGON, a symposium on this very important matter. It will be a series of critical articles, with no punches pulled, which should do a lot of good."

Comments on these papers are invited, in the hope that they may provide the basis for a further discussion in a subsequent issue of THE OCTAGON.

CHARLES T. INGHAM, *Secretary*

Constructive Criticisms of Architects

BY A. C. SHIRE, TECHNICAL DIRECTOR—UNITED STATES HOUSING AUTHORITY

TWO years ago low-rent housing by local governments with federal aid was a thin pamphlet fresh from the government printing office. Today it is, among other things, one of the biggest architectural jobs in history. In a hundred and twenty cities, several thousand architects, engineers, landscape architects, and their assistants of all degrees are working on plans and specifications for

nearly 250 projects that will house about a hundred thousand families. Every week sees the award of a new batch of construction contracts, and builders are going to work in city after city.

The United States Housing Authority and the cities of the country and the architects have made a start on this job of housing. The local architects throughout the country have worked hard, and this impressive accomplishment would not have been possible without them. But the future is longer than the past and this is a good time to forget quantity for a moment and to think of quality—to ask ourselves how well we are doing the job and in what ways we can do it better.

I acknowledge the importance of the architect's part in the housing movement, but I want to emphasize the fact that this is a new kind of work for architects, that it calls for new lobes, so to speak, in the architectural brain—not to mention a new professional morality and a new relation of responsibility to client and public. I should be negligent of my obligation to the USHA program if I did not strive in every way to induce the architectural profession to give more complete and effective service to housing. To this end I feel it necessary to make certain indictments against the kind of work some—or many—of the local architects have been doing. In this process, I propose to stick a few well sharpened pins into the professional skin—and the more sensitive it proves to be, the better I shall be pleased.

Defining the Problem

What are the criteria by which the work of the architect shall be judged? The program, as laid down by Congress in the U. S. Housing Act of 1937 states that financial assistance be provided to the "States and political subdivisions thereof for the elimination of unsafe and insanitary housing conditions, for the eradication of slums, *for the provision of decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for families of low income. . . .*"

The Act also requires "that such projects will not be of elaborate or expensive design or materials and that economy will be promoted both in construction and administration. . . ." and that average construction costs will not exceed the average cost of dwellings produced by private enterprise under similar conditions.

The architect must therefore always remember that he is designing for:

1. Low cost—so that a given sum of money can provide housing for as many families as possible without sacrifice of the other essentials.

2. Low rent—so that this housing can be brought within the reach of the lowest income group.

3. Adequate housing—decent, safe, sanitary, providing the essentials of light, sanitary facilities, and privacy for the individual and the family; social life for the family and the group; pleasant, simple, comfortable surroundings.

Realism or Pretty Pictures?

The commonest mistake that local authorities and architects make is that they don't know their real clients, the people who will live in the houses—don't know their habits and needs and means. The average tenant of subsidized housing will earn less than a thousand dollars a year. Apparently an American architect can't imagine a family income of less than about three or four thousand dollars. Hence the whole tone of his approach becomes unrealistic. When he gets down to brass tacks he is still several economic strata above reality.

When we try to bring to the architect the stern realities of subsidized housing, he is likely to show irritation, as if we were taking the fun out of the job. What hope is there for housing if architects can't break through their accumulated spiritual cobwebs and meet the need for invention and simplification, finding a new kind of design that is consistent with the new human and physical materials they are working with? If they can't supply this vision who will? It is time they were more concerned with the real needs of low income families than with charm, symmetry, traditional style, and bourgeois standards.

Are architects interested only in the things that can be photographed for publication? As far as the interior layout is concerned the architect quite willingly accepts the suggestions made by USHA: it saves him the trouble of thinking about the real problem at hand—how to provide for the life of the people who will occupy the project. "Yes, sure, the plans are good enough anyway you suggest, but don't take away my sloping roofs, the canopies supported by wrought iron ornamentation at the house

entrances, false chimneys, architraves around windows, the cupola on my community building. How can you have architecture without these things? Surely you don't want this project to look like an institution?" I can never understand that remark about an institution. Every time I hear it, I go out and look at another institution and every time I find on it all the things the architects wants to put on this housing project to *keep* it from looking like an institution. Well, anyway, in a little while I'll be an expert on institutional architecture.

And when it comes to laying out the buildings on the site, does the architect strive for economy and livability, the most in terms of usefulness for the least in terms of rent? Does he study his site and aspire to make his plan fit it like the proverbial glove? He does not. He drives around the property once and believes that if it isn't flat it can be made so. He approaches the site plan as a long-awaited ladder to professional glory. Lifting a motif from an English garden city plan—don't architects know about any other kind of city plan except the "Garden City" of the '90's?—he repeats it nine times so that on paper—or from the air—the project will look like a beautiful piece of linoleum. One of the courts falls on a fifteen foot diagonal slope—this gives him a chance to get some charming informal effects with retaining walls and steps, up and down which the tenants, for a century or so, will be privileged to push their baby buggies. No such thoughts of daily use vulgarize this act of aesthetic creation. Far from being challenged by site planning for the housing of the under-privileged, the 1920-style architect asks merely, *how he may get a maximum paper symmetry with a minimum of what he calls monotony.*

The Design Elements

Low rent is the *sine qua non* of subsidized housing and under the USHA program low maintenance costs are to low rents what eggs are to an omelette. That is a new idea to most architects; they have been used to thinking of maintenance as a small item compared with interest and taxes. Thus here again, the architect is under the distressing necessity of having a new idea. He must think of things in terms of the care they need. And he must see that the maintenance money is spent for things that will make life easier for the tenants. For example, anything that requires periodic painting adds to the rent, and the more elaborate it is the more it costs to paint it, and hence the more it adds to the rent. Naturally, therefore, there should be a minimum of trim and that minimum should be simple. What good is a five-member cornice to a woman who has to cook, wash, and otherwise care for a five-member family?

What she needs is an efficiently planned place, easily cared for and cleaned, in which to bring up her family. Rooms designed for proper placing of furniture are more important than evenly spaced windows: a surprising number of projects are submitted in which apparently no consideration whatsoever has been given to where people will sit or where beds are to go or where children are to study or play.

That family wants to look out on trees and shrubs, grass and flowers. But they don't want to watch gardeners cutting the grass, pruning the shrubs, weeding the flower beds, when their rent is helping to pay that gardener's wages. Low-rent housing projects should be laid out for a maximum of tenant use and tenant maintenance instead of being planned and cared for as a show place, a park with "keep off the grass" signs all about.

Then there is the insistence on banal symmetry —usually in connection with the administration or community building. "Ha!" says the architect, "here at last I do architecture!" and forces his site plan into absurd contortions to get the chimney of the heating plant on axis. Or he designs his row houses to look like a sumptuous Georgian mansion, crowds them on the land, and nearly dies when he learns that tenants hang out their wash and that garbage cans have to be placed somewhere for collection.

Too often the architects take a passive attitude about all these things, a tell-us-what-you-want attitude like a shopkeeper selling a stick of candy to every kid who has a penny. No knowledge of the problem, no convictions, no leadership in a field in which intelligent leadership is sorely needed. "Why antagonize a client?"—if the Local Authority wants it that way, presumably they want it that way for good and sufficient reason—our job is to give 'em what they want. (*Continued on page 6*)

What Price Architecture?

Still another field in which architects appear to depend upon a general impression rather than upon definite knowledge is that of costs. A designer must be cost-conscious in drawing every line, and the whole organization of a housing architect's office should be oriented strongly in the cost direction.

It is not just a lack of definite knowledge of costs, but a lack of definite interest in cost that appears in most of the projects submitted. This probably stems from private practice in which a few dollars saved are a few dollars that remain in the clients pocket. Whereas a few dollars saved in each of many hundred dwelling units in a project are used to provide more dwelling units. In public housing projects, the architect is in a position of public trust; his attitude should be one not of mere acceptance of ordinary practice, but of service to the community in seeing that money expended goes towards the purpose of the Act.

The contract for financial assistance which the local authority enters into with the USHA, and with which is tied the contract between the architect and the local authority, sets a definite upper limit of cost for the project.

Yet we often find that when the architect submits the preliminary estimate for approval it shows a total expected cost of more than the maximum amount the local authority has to spend!

What is the explanation? Is this business of designing for low costs and low rents so different from all the architect's previous training and experience that he has not yet acquired the essential technique? If this is true perhaps a new type of technical education for architects is necessary.

Housing And The Architect

By J. Fletcher Lankton—Architect*

SLUM-CLEARANCE and low-rent housing are popular news item words today. However, to the public, including most of the technical profession, these names have no meaning except as an indication of a program in which they are not interested.

Housing Programs of any kind, as sponsored by the Federal Government, are only a few years old. With very few exceptions, architects in the United States did not become interested until a short time ago. This was due to the fact that the first projects promoted by the Public Works Administration were placed in the eastern part of the United States. The great majority of the architects in the other parts of the country remained in comparative ignorance as to the program. Only a few of those directly interested gave study to this work that was being carried on in the East and South. The program was criticized by the Press and ignored by the professions.

When the United States Housing Authority program was set up and funds were available to local housing authorities for housing programs, there was an immediate rush over the country to obtain these funds for local projects. There was a sudden demand on the architectural profession to produce the necessary plans and specifications required to comply with the law and with the policies of the United States Housing Authority.

The above statements are made to offer some excuse for the difficulties that have been experienced by the architectural profession in reference to the present United States Housing Authority program.

Every self-respecting architect has developed through his education and training, and later in his own practice, very definite opinions as a basis for the solution to any building program. Therefore, the tendency of the Architects employed by the various housing authorities was to follow previous practice and to judge the results to be expected by the results that had been obtained in their former private practice.

When the architect made his first analysis of a proposed project, it appeared to be very simple. It was apparent that the buildings should be fundamental and simple in design, that the construction should be as inexpensive as possible, but designed to be structurally sound and to require the minimum of maintenance over a long period of time. The

* Member of a local housing authority.

site plan was thought of in terms of conventional subdivision layouts.

In most cases, the technicians of the United States Housing Authority concurred with the opinion of the architect in the above-mentioned matters. However, in the early months of the program neither realized the seriousness and the difficulty to be expected in attempting to conform with all the requirements of the laws and the policies of the United States together with those of the varying conditions in the many cities of the United States. Conflicting codes, state legislation, political pressure, true and untrue propoganda published by manufacturers of certain materials all joined to cause confusion. More serious was the suddenly discovered fact that it was next to impossible to secure architects who could agree on the definite methods of procedure and the correct answer to the many architectural problems. This was true, both within the staff of the United States Housing Authority and with the architects in private practice who were interested in the program.

Blame for this condition cannot be placed on either the United States Housing Authority or the architectural profession. The conditions are a result of the evolution of the new social order in which many policies must be determined by the trial and error method. However, there is no excuse for the continuation of practices by new organizations that have proved to be in error by those more experienced. Even though the program is quite young, there are many facts that have been definitely determined, and which can not be overlooked. The establishment of these should be of the greatest possible value to those starting programs at the present time.

Architects as a group have not yet learned to cooperate with members of their own profession. A certain jealousy seems to exist more than that found in either the medical or the legal profession. There is an undetermined line or classification between the architects, the landscape architects, and the heating and plumbing engineers. A feeling exists apparently that each of these professions is attempting to encroach on the other rather than to cooperate.

The architect's place in any housing program remains unquestioned. However, the requirement and the power are yet undetermined. The matter of compensation which is now fairly well established is still open to controversy.

In conclusion there are several facts which have been established by experience:

1. The architect, together with the legal counsel, should be the first technician employed by an authority. One and not more than two local architects should be employed by any authority on every project, to be selected on their qualifications. A requirement of this employment should be that if the architect or architects employed have not had previous experience in a similar housing program, they be required to employ as consultant an architect who has established himself in this field.

2. The engineer and the landscape architect should be approved by the authority before employment is made.

3. The establishment of all fees between the above-mentioned parties should be agreed prior to the signing of the contract between the housing authority and the architect.

If the local authority has employed a technical director who has a full understanding of architectural functions, including the qualifications mentioned above for the consultant, then the consultant may be omitted.

If it is the desire of the local authority that other architects be employed in addition to those employed directly for the work, then, prior to entering into a contract with the local architect, arrangements should be made satisfactory to the architect whereby he will cooperate in the production of the work with the architects agreed upon. These architects should be directly under his employment and he should in no case relinquish any responsibility to the authority. In no case should the local authority attempt to deal with more than one man delegated to this work.

A system whereby the local authority should employ a technical director on a salary basis to handle all architectural work and all technical work for the authority, has not been sufficiently tried to prove its value. It may be the solution providing a sufficient salary is allowed to employ an architect with the necessary qualifications and ability.

The foregoing statement is merely the personal opinion of an architect member of the local housing authority in the process of a five-million dollar project, who has been involved in the housing program since long before the creation of the United States Housing Authority program.

Selecting and Paying Architects For Local Authority Housing

By Coleman Woodbury*

THE growing but relatively short list of those who have made real contributions to American low-rent housing includes the names of many architects. Such pioneers of the present movement as Henry Wright and Clarence Stein of New York, Frederick Bigger of Pittsburgh, Ernest Grunsfeld and Henry Holsman of Chicago, Eugene H. Klaber, formerly of Chicago and now of Washington, Walter McCornack of Cleveland, and William Stanley Parker of Boston, were working for low-rent housing while the very term still sounded strange in the ears of most people in this country. Like many other thinkers, analyzers, and planners, their contributions are often underestimated by those who have followed.

Much that these men and others started still remains to be finished. With local authority housing a going concern, however, other questions and problems are also coming to the front. Chief among them are the administrative questions of selecting and paying architects for their part in local authority housing. These are difficult problems. Their solutions are made more difficult, however, by the hesitancy and lack of directness with which they are usually approached. It is time to brush aside this hesitancy and to come to grips with these problems, just as the housing pioneers swept aside certain customs, certain fixed ideas, and gave us a clearer conception of the realities of housing planning and design.

All this article can do is to bring into the open discussions and arguments that have been going on for some time. Inasmuch as this kind of housing is public business, it is high time these discussions reached this broader platform. Progress toward solutions is also imperative. The present condition of practice and thought in this matter is one of the two or three most serious weaknesses in local authority housing.

To recognize this fact is not to censure nor condemn those responsible for present arrangements. All the present practice was developed under pressures of time and circumstances. Temporary practices so devised were the best possible for a short-term emergency program and yet are unsuitable or are a positive menace to a long-run policy. They have met an urgent, temporary need. The blame will fall upon housing administrators and architects, not of the past, but of the present and future, if they do not work out together methods of selection and compensation adapted to the continuing, long-time program upon the threshold of which we now stand.

Preliminary Precautions

An authority always should keep in mind a triple objective in selecting and dealing with professional men: (a) a comfortable, economical, and attractive housing project; (b) encouragement to first-rate technicians to learn more about housing; (c) public understanding of the authority's methods that will create for it further respect and confidence. No method that does not contribute to *all* of these ends deserves serious consideration.

In addition, a local authority always should keep in mind the three major technical steps in qualifying a project under the USHA-local authorities' program. In brief, they are: (a) general planning, resulting in earmarking of funds by USHA for the authority; (b) preparing applications for financial assistance, which requires sketch plans, outline specifications, and cost estimates for a specific project; (c) perfection of working drawings and specifications.

If the whole process is broken down into these three reasonable steps and with these triple objectives in mind, the selection of professional employees can be a much easier task than it sometimes seems. Relatively little technical assistance is needed in the first step. It should be provided preferably by the technical director or, if the authority does not have one and the executive director needs help, by an outside consultant. The same arrangement can be made for the preliminary plans needed in the second step. Thus the contract for final drawings and detailed specifications need not be made until the authority has had time and information to decide

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* Mr. Woodbury is Executive Director of the National Association of Housing Officials and Vice-Chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority. This article expresses his personal views and does not commit these or other organizations with which he is connected.

fairly definitely what kind of housing is needed and what will qualify under the terms of the United States Housing Act.

Another very strong argument can be made for this procedure. Preliminary analysis and site and unit planning call for an understanding of low-rent housing possessed at the present time by relatively few architects. Some of those who are eminently qualified for this work have little of the organizing and executive ability necessary to turn out final drawings and specifications for a large-scale project. Under the suggested procedure, however, the analytical and planning functions may be separated from the executive and detailed operations which are a part of producing final drawings and specifications.

Methods of Selection

Some authorities may be inclined to employ, without further consideration or investigation, a firm or group of architects known favorably to one or more of their members. Although this procedure may seem a natural step, it is really a very dangerous one. practically no architectural reputations have been made in low-rent housing. Architects picked in an off-hand manner, therefore, will usually be those who have specialized in other types of buildings. Many, probably most of them, will have had little or no experience in housing design. If they have been fairly successful in other types of work, the chances are they will have given housing little or no study. Furthermore, this method of selection discourages other technical men, whose attitude is: why should an architect or engineer try to equip himself for housing when he sees that contracts are being given to acquaintances or friends of authority members or to "big name" firms with no housing experience? Finally, this method is open to fair public criticism, as well as to a wide range of inferences. The line between such a procedure and outright favoritism or "political" maneuvering is at best a very thin one. Furthermore, once this system is accepted, housing jobs will go not to those architects who know and are learning more about housing but to those firms who specialize in getting business under this catch-as-catch-can method. Local authorities certainly should heed the warning about Caesar's wife.

Another bad method of selection is based on what might be called the share-the-work theory. For some reason or other, there are those who feel that designing housing projects is a highly lucrative enterprise, a public endowment that ought to be passed around among all the architects in a city, or at least among all the architects in a certain group or clique. In other words, the theory virtually says, if a man works hard on one project and really learns something about what he is doing, he should not expect to have a chance to add to or apply his knowledge again until several years have given other architects in the city a chance at the fees. Looked at from the authority's side of things, the theory goes, an authority and its technical staff should start each project with an architect or group of architects inexperienced in housing.

It is amazing how many people seem to hold this highly impractical view. But, of course, it must be conceded that there is also no reason for forming a monopoly group of those architects who are fortunate enough to get the first jobs. If the dangers of the extremes are clearly stated, it should not be difficult to avoid both of them. New firms and individuals can be employed in conjunction with some of those who have had previous experience. They can be combined in small groups of associated architects or they can be employed as consultants to advise the authority's technical staff.

Precedent of PWA Program Unusual

However, a warning seems in order here. The PWA program was organized primarily to combat unemployment. Partially for this reason, many PWA housing projects were designed by large groups of architects, often with subsidiary or consultant groups. Nearly everyone connected with this procedure now condemns it for a long-range program not primarily designed to spread employment opportunities. Many housing officials believe that under most circumstances three is the maximum number for an architectural group and that in many respects two, or even one, is better (not counting engineers, landscape architects, or other professional men who may be needed).

Another argument for the PWA choice of large groups was that it gave more professional men an introduction to housing problems and possibilities. Something can be said for this consideration. However, it should not be forgotten that such educational subsidies may be rather expensive to the

authority, particularly if unqualified professional men expect to be paid the same fee that men experienced in this kind of work receive. Under nearly all circumstances the weight of the argument is definitely against large professional groups.

Recommended Methods

Most of the more satisfactory methods of selection can be called either selection by qualification or by competition.

Qualification: The essence of this method is to assemble information on the training and experience of professional men, to weigh this information according to its pertinence to housing design, and thus to have a somewhat objective measure of the competence of prospective employees for the job under consideration.

The first step in selection by qualification should be for an authority's technical director to take up the matter with the officers of all bona fide organizations of professional men in the city. He should be familiar with the personnel and attitudes of these organizations. A simple questionnaire should then be made up and sent to all professional men in the city, or elsewhere, who might be eligible for the work. It need not be long nor complicated; some of the questions will be perfectly obvious. It should request information about employment on housing, including large-scale developments for moderate or low-income families. Although the weight to be attached to it may be open to question, previous work for public bodies, housing or otherwise, ought to be ascertained. Working under the restrictions imposed by statutes and regulations controlling public work requires certain qualities that all professional men do not possess.

Most authorities will receive a large proportion of replies to such a questionnaire. They can be examined by the technical director, possibly with an authority member and a representative of the professional society or societies. Reports from this examination should indicate not only general experience, but also the executive ability needed by at least one in each architectural group.

There is no magic about such a procedure. In no sense is it a substitute for judgment. It does, however, give a large number of prospective employees a chance to submit their records for review and consideration. It also gives the authority a certain background of facts to supplement the information and opinions of its members and staff. Furthermore, it gives some leads, particularly as to experience in large-scale housing or other residential work, that can be followed up by personal inspection or consultation with previous clients.

Competition: A competition attempts to test the ability of prospective professional employees by comparing their performance on a particular problem, either an actual problem being faced by the authority or a similar hypothetical one. Here again the technical director and the representatives of professional societies should collaborate in submitting a proposal to the authority. The jury should not be a narrowly technical one. Some of its members should be those who would look primarily to the livability of the housing and the economy of the plans. A professional adviser or advisers to the jury should be provided.

The selection may be of one professional man or of a group for a particular project. In towns in which a continuing program seems probable, however, a number of submissions may be selected among which the architects will be chosen for two or more projects in the future. Too many drawings should not be permitted, however, because as the program of the authority goes ahead, ideas concerning design may change. The authority should not be committed to too many firms on the basis of a first competition.

In making its selection for its first projects, an inexperienced authority might consider asking USHA's technical staff to review and comment upon the better submissions. Thus, without being bound in any way, a local authority might secure the benefit of the wider experience and large technical staff of the central agency.

Under some circumstances, too, it might be well for the authority to reserve the right to interview competitors before making the final decision. In this way the poorer submissions would be eliminated promptly and a relatively few men would meet with the jury or with the authority itself to discuss their plans at greater length, to answer questions, and thus to give the authority a clearer idea of their personal characteristics and grasp of the subject. To some extent this would offset the greatest weakness of the straight competition, which provides little basis for estimating the ability of the competitors to get along with associates or employers, or to judge whether or not they have the executive ability re-

quired to handle a large group of draftsmen, consultants, and other subordinates.

It would be possible, of course, to combine selection by qualification with a competition. A preliminary selection might be made from the records of experience and those passing this test could be invited to submit drawings in a competition.

Methods of Compensation

Unless no other way is open, the local authority should beware of mixing its financing with its employment of professional men. In other words, it should make every effort to secure sufficient working funds so that it can select architects without asking them to finance the preparation of the necessary drawings and documents. If forced to make such a request, the authority may have to limit its choice because some of the best qualified architects may not be in a position to act as bankers for a public agency. Furthermore, mixing the professional relationship with that of a financing agency is also likely to make further complications in determining the proper compensation for the services rendered. Under certain circumstances such a hybrid arrangement may be the only practical procedure, but every effort should be made to avoid it.

Probably nowhere will local authorities find more obstacles to clear, consistent thinking, than in determining a fair compensation for professional services. For various reasons this subject is beclouded with evasions and misunderstanding and hedged about with all kinds of prejudices and taboos. The authorities' problem will be much more difficult in some cities than in others, but in all of them it can be solved if the members and their executive director understand that they are simply buying a valuable and specialized service. The form of negotiations and contract may be different, but in essence the problem is the same as the employment of any other necessary service.

The United States Housing Authority is charged with seeing that architects and other professional men receive no more than a reasonable wage for their services. This provision, however, does not release local authorities from the responsibility for determining the method of estimating compensation and the amount of such compensation. USHA's power is merely a supervisory one exercised in the interests of economy in development costs. Local authorities ought not to place responsibility for the entire decision upon USHA. This dependence is entirely contrary to the spirit and intent of the Act. It would make USHA the active agency rather than the supervising lender. Certainly if local authorities simply dump their difficult problems on the desks of USHA, they will have little complaint later if the Authority should decide, possibly unconsciously, that it must determine policies and reduce the local authorities to the rôle of its agents.

Flat Rate: Fortunately, there is general agreement that the flat percentage fee, regardless of the size of the development, is definitely out of serious consideration. It was developed for types of work entirely dissimilar to the design of low-rent housing projects. Public buildings and expensive residences, for example, require much greater variety of treatment. They have little or no repetition of units. The funds available make possible a wide choice among different designs, materials, and equipment. Personal tastes have to be understood and either acceded to or compromised with. Finally, extreme economy in production and maintenance cost is seldom if ever a preliminary consideration. The total of these differences invalidates analogies drawn from most other types of architectural practices to low-rent housing.

Sliding Scale Percentage Fees: Professional societies have recognized the inapplicability of the flat percentage fee by approving sliding scales, in which the percentage of the fee decreases with the size of the project. Such scales have been developed, on an admittedly experimental basis, by USHA. These scales, whatever their merits in emergency programs and as a start, have certain very serious disadvantages as the normal practice in a long-term program and these disadvantages should be carefully considered by local authorities.

In the first place, by common consent economy should be one of the authority's constant objectives. Stated as mildly as possible, a percentage fee offers the professional man no inducement to save in original costs. It is assumed, of course, that most of the professional men employed will be of such caliber that they would not *deliberately* increase construction costs or project density merely to make their fees higher. This assumption, however, is not enough protection. The fact remains that the amount of the compensation varies with the cost of

the project, which is a serious hazard to the economy of low-rent housing.

Secondly, the percentage fee arrangement tends to obscure, if not to hide completely, the amount of payment made to the principals. To the extent that this is true, a local authority is buying certain services without knowing what it is paying for them. Stated thus baldly, such a practice is difficult to defend on the part of any public body or official. Certainly the least that should be expected would be for the authority to have its technical director estimate the professional men's expenses and the probable net fee. This net compensation can then be compared with other payments for somewhat similar services to the authority's program.

In the third place, figuring by percentages on a large project is much too crude a process. For example, most authority members would have an uncomfortable feeling of splitting hairs if they argued about a change of say, ¼ of one per cent. Yet on a $4,000,000 project, ¼ percent is $10,000; on $10,000,000 it is $25,000.

This drawback suggests the fourth disadvantage of sliding scale compensation. Only by chance can percentage fees be fairly related to the salaries paid by local authorities to their chief staff members—executive officers, technical directors, general managers, etc.—whose services are quite as vital to the development of satisfactory housing as those of the architects. Unless there is a clear, reasonable relationship between payments for architectural and these other services, local housing administration is headed for trouble. This relationship should, of course, be between *net* compensations and should take account of the intermittent character of some of the services.

Unless this balance of compensation exists, however, local authorities are open to serious charges of lack of economy. Good compensation for vital services is true economy but what possible justification is there for modest salaries to major staff members and modest fortunes to architects? It is bad economy of public money. It reduces the program of housing for poor families. It is a formidable obstacle to building up competent, professionally-minded authority staffs.

I am not saying that all architects now working on percentage fees for housing are overpaid. Those who are not overpaid have nothing to lose by a change in the basis of compensation to a method of payment that establishes a fair and comparable scale of authority salaries. Those who are overpaid should realize that their temporary gain may well be a long-term loss to themselves, their profession, the local authorities, and the poorly housed.

Finally, sliding scales are open to the criticism of not taking account of differences in costs of producing drawings and specifications from city to city. They also show considerable difference in the rate at which they are scaled down. Some knowledge of net fees shows an increase for larger projects not related to proportionate difficulties or skill.

Flat Fee Plus Costs: Local authorities might well consider a policy of flat fees to architects and other principal professional employees, with costs of materials, space, draftsmen, special consultants, etc., paid directly by the authority upon proper certification, up to an agreed upon maximum for these expenses. This plan has the merits of being straightforward and easily understood. Under it, professional men will be protected against the uninformed critic who feels that architects' fees are exorbitant without realizing the nature and extent of expenses which, under the old plan, had to come out of the gross fees. On the other hand, the local authority is in the position to know what it is paying for the principals' services, just as it knows what it is paying for the services of its executive director, housing manager, or other professional experts. The architects and engineers, within the limits of expenses agreed upon, are not tempted to skimp on salaries or necessary consultant work in order to increase their own compensation. The authority, on its side, is protected against unnecessary incidental expenses by the maximum agreed upon and by its right to review expense accounts from time to time.

This plan, in addition to its very obvious advantages, has the immense practical merit of similarity to the arrangement evolved by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department after years of trial and error, involving hundreds of millions of dollars of work. The Treasury recently announced the extension of its plan for regional competitions in the design of post offices and the other federal buildings that it constructs. The winner of the competition is paid a direct fee for directing and overseeing the preparation of plans and specifications. This work is done, however, in the Procurement Divi-

sion's offices by its employees. In comment on this plan THE OCTAGON, A.I.A.'s monthly, said in part: "The architects throughout the country will be glad to learn of the very sympathetic and friendly attitude shown by Mr. Morgenthau toward the request that action be taken leading to the greatest possible employment of architects in private practice for public work. It is indeed rare to find a layman with as deep an understanding of the problems of the profession. The Secretary was fully in accord with the suggestion offered that competitions be held on a regional basis in order to foster the development of our heritage of diversified architectural styles. It was by his direction that the group headed by Admiral Peoples set up the districts described in the release. On the other hand, in view of the criticism of methods of handing work out by direct selection, the Secretary was unwilling to consider any method of direct selection.

"While the Procurement Division is convinced that in the ordinary type of building it is better qualified than any private architect to prepare working drawings and specifications and supervise construction, it has stated definitely that in the case of private architects winning competitions it proposes to give them every facility in the matter of visiting Washington to supervise and control the preparation of these drawings, specifications, and details, with due provision for traveling expenses and time spent by the architects."

Most local authorities will not wish, for the present at least, to build up a large staff comparable to Procurement's to turn out plans and specifications but a budget for actual costs with an agreed upon maximum is a feasible alternative. It preserves the unmistakable and tested merits of this procedure.

The Authority Its Own Architect: Although very few authorities are now in a position to consider a final possibility seriously, many of them might weigh the advisability, in the future, of enlarging their technical staffs so that they can do most of the professional work needed with the aid only of outside consultants employed on per diem or other short-term arrangement.* There is good precedent for this method in European practice. Low-rent housing in most British, and nearly all Continental, cities has been designed by the permanent staffs of departments of public agencies. The results, particularly on the Continent, certainly refute the common charge that this arrangement kills initiative and results in undistinguished, humdrum design. Outside consultants from time to time would give new ideas and stimulating criticisms. Admittedly, however, this practice would be limited to the larger cities and would be feasible for them only under circumstances assuring continuing, long-term programs.

Professional Attitude

In connection with this general subject, local authorities and professional men ought to study carefully a section of Mr. Nathan Straus' address before the Architectural League of New York on February 3, 1938. He said in part:

"Now I have a personal message for the architects of America.

"One of the greatest services you can render to the American architectural profession and to the cause of low-cost housing, in my belief, is to encourage a different attitude toward government housing among members of your profession. A government housing project should not be regarded merely as an architectural job. Government housing should not be regarded merely as a source of fees. Government housing should be, and I hope will be for many of our architects, a career.

"Today we are faced with the definite need for adequately trained technical staffs on local housing authorities. Trained housing architects, ready to devote themselves, in the public service, to the cause of low-cost housing, are especially needed today in many states throughout the country.

"Architects who are interested in housing can often serve better by going directly into local authorities than by standing on the outside and acting merely in what has been in this country the traditional role of architects.

"This great field for the architect already has been recognized and assumed in countries abroad. The outstanding housing architects abroad have been associated with housing legislation and policy continuously from its inception. The architects of Scandinavia, the architects of Great Britain, the

* See the very able article by Howard Dwight Smith: *"Architecture in the Public Service,"* an address before the Annual Meeting of the National Public Housing Conference, reprinted by the National Association of Housing Officials, 1939.

architects of Holland, the architects of Italy, and the architects of Germany in the days of the Republic, are inextricably associated in the public mind with their own low-cost housing programs in those countries. May I mention a few of them:

"Among the most outstanding in England are: L. H. Keay, Housing Director of Liverpool; R. A. H. Livett, Housing Director of Leeds; Barry Parker, Planner of Letchworth Garden City and of Wythenshawe; and Sir Raymond Unwin, of whom I spoke earlier.

"In Germany there were: Walter Gropius and Walter Curt Behrendt, who are both now in America; Ernst May, of Frankfurt; Martin Wagner, of Berlin; Otto Haesler, of Cassell, and dozens, if not hundreds of others who held responsible public offices during the German renaissance between 1922 and 1932.

"Holland has: W. M. Dudok, Director of Public Works of Hilversum; Arie Keppler, Head of the Housing Department of Amsterdam; and J. J. P. Oud, former City Architect of Rotterdam.

"And finally in Sweden there are: Dr. Wallender, Director of the H.S.B., National Cooperative Housing Society; Eskil Sundahl, Architect for the Kooperative Forbundet; Sven Markelius, Developer of the cooperative housing projects; and Uno Ahren, City Planner of Gothenburg. . . .

"There are opening up in this country today like opportunities for making slum-clearance and low-rent housing construction a life career. May our own architects make use of these great opportunities."

To Teach Housing is Also to Teach Architecture

By Carl Feiss, Associate in Architecture, Planning and Housing Division, School of Architecture, Columbia University

THERE are very few architects in the United States today, if they are graduates of accredited architectural schools, who were not directly or indirectly subject to a 19th century French system of training. The "Beaux Arts System" created a physical method of instruction easy to understand and to administer, and which is still the basis for architectural education in most of our schools today. The Problem Method, which is this system's real contribution to educational procedure, has not been superseded even in the most progressive schools, although it often has been considerably modified. I do not intend to discuss here the pros and cons of the Beaux Arts System but wish to make clear that there are two types of problem methods which can be distinguished clearly from each other and which are constantly forming the basis of contention in and out of the schools.

Our charming, cultured, and distinguished design professors, whether at the École or imported, created fascinating imaginary architectural situations with an aura of such probability that the imagination of the student was fired to the utmost. Incredible towers pierced the skys, innumerable palaces for innumerable exiled monarchs graced cliffs that Capri must have envied. The cathedrals, villas and war memorials which we designed were no end fun to do, took lots of time and paint, and were grand for the development of the imagination. And they could be built too! Our construction men saw to that. Of course in the lower design grades there were simpler little buildings—shelters, bath houses, branch libraries—anything for anywhere. It was all basically a very simple procedure. The problem was issued. The student did an esquisse to which he was supposed to adhere no matter how bad it was (he was also to adhere to the program, no matter how bad it was), and at a certain time, after a certain number of hours of hard labor, criticism and lots of real fun during charette, he handed in his drawings. A passing grade at judgment assured him that he had created "architecture".

There were many excellent elements to this type of problem. A good critic, according to the classical standard, could stimulate the imagination, could teach a man good planning and proportion and a sense of materials. He could also give him a proper respect for tradition, for the background and

iconography of architecture, and could assist him in developing the student's sense of beauty if it existed. Where this type of teaching failed, and failed dismally, was in the fields of reality. We have only to look at our cities around us to realize this failure. Our architects have continued to design old-fashioned school problems even after they were out of school—falsely isolated buildings having little to do with the social and economic life of the community, let alone its planning.

The architect is an architect, you say, and is not an economist, a lawyer, a sociologist, a city planner, or anything else. Granting that there are no Leonardo's in our midst today, the world is not going to wait for the birth of such a paragon and will look to the schools to prepare substitutes. When A. C. Shire states in his article in this issue of "THE OCTAGON", "Is this business of designing for low costs and low rents so different from all the architect's previous training and experience that he has not yet acquired the essential technique? If this is true, perhaps a new type of technical education for architects is necessary"—he is not asking for a Leonardo, although Leonardo would have understood what was wanted. Shire is asking for a man with the kind of training which the present-day world requires. This man may not know what the words poché, rendû, ésquisse, entourage, etc. may mean, but he may know something about the dynamics of population; the principles of community planning; he may have one weather eye out for the latest experiment in plywood construction and the other eye on its effect on the labor unions.

Today's Job

This brings us to the second type of problem method—the method dealing with actualities. Housing is perhaps the most vital single architectural problem facing us today. Housing is architecture. But it is not facade and poché architecture. There is no help from a Parthenon or Chartres or Paris Opera House or White Pine Series. Each project is unique—the function of its special situation and all the source material in the world adds only a little to the sum total of knowledge of this infant architecture. To teach housing we build not upon a base of imagery but on a scientific humanism. Immediately the question arises—what can be the student's incentive to work with all the pleasure of "architectural" design taken away? Take the student for a walk through the slums his first afternoon in school and show him that some day it will be his job to clear that mess—build homes, schools, parks, health centers, theatres and shopping centers and all the rest. It takes no time to create a real and enthusiastic service attitude in even the most inexperienced man. This service attitude is the key to the whole new method of architectural training. All of the old incentives are there plus the will to serve the public as well as the client. The architect may yet become a professional in spirit.

We have said Housing is architecture. European architects have recognized this for the last fifty years, very few American for the last five. The example of the European architect can be held up to the eternal shame of the American. In England, Scandinavia, Germany, France and Holland, long before the war, architects were promoting housing, were helping in the establishment of housing authorities, were experimenting in new methods in construction and design, were taking an interest in the improvement of the environment of the working classes and the low-income groups. Architects were leaders; they were not coming around to their governments sniveling for jobs. They created housing as an integral and important part of the profession, sold it to the public, and taught it in the architectural schools. In this country our architects have been disdainful of anything to do with the low-income groups, have considered that community planning was a gardening job to be handled by landscape architects and dreamt rosy dreams of Windsor Castles in the hills of Connecticut. Irrespective of whether you are a radical or a conservative as far as your taste in architectural styles is concerned (if your architecture must have a style), you must recognize the importance of men like Taut, Schumacher, Ernst May, and Walter Gropius from Germany; J. J. P. Oud and Dudok from Holland; Sundhal and Markelius in Sweden. In England countless architects beginning with Barry Parker and Sir Raymond Unwin and continuing on to Tecton have contributed to the building of three million homes since the war. These are housing architects. They also have been leaders in their community, not only architecturally and artistically in prominence, but they also have been political and social forces as well. Their accomplishments in their own countries have been pointed to with great pride by younger architects who are hoping con-

stantly to be able to do as well in environmental improvement and in the creation of beautiful architecture as did these older architects. But not so long ago I was talking to the senior partner of a well-known architectural firm in New York City who said to me, "If I had thought that architecture would ever come to the all-time low point of building shacks for dagoes and wops I'd have gone into my father's brokerage house as he always wanted me to". I shared his regrets.

Architects are now coming around to me and are asking, "What are the tricks in this housing business? I'd like to get some of this government money. Can I take a short course at Columbia which will give me all the dope?" Frankly, I'm pretty much ashamed and disgusted with the whole situation. Shire is correct not only in his statement that a new type of technical education is necessary, but a whole new professional attitude of the architect seems to be necessary as well. The schools have a big job ahead of them, and in addition there is a huge problem of adult education which the architectural schools cannot tackle or are not ready to.

An Old Profession—But a New Attitude

Housing is architecture. But housing is shelter for human beings. Good housing establishes certain standards of environment which are not only the architect's responsibility but involve the sociologist, the home economist, the teacher, the physician, and pretty nearly every individual in the community. Housing is not only the design of individual cells in a multicellular structure, or the design of that structure. It is the design of a complete community. The housing architect has a responsibility not only to his client, whether that client be the federal or local government or a private agency such as an insurance company, or a bank, but he has a responsibility to every man, woman and child who is to live in the homes he creates. If he is a true professional man, he will take this responsibility seriously, realizing that the health, welfare and safety and the future happiness of many thousands of people may depend on the success of his efforts. When the architect truly realizes this responsibility, and when he visualizes the fact that his job is not ended when the keys are turned over to the manager of the project, but that it has actually just begun; that from then on he must constantly check and cross-check his work so that errors are corrected and never made again, then in my opinion does he become a real professional man, with a standing comparable to the best in medicine and law. He is performing a service to his community and creating something which can have more than mere physical beauty.

That is the first thing we have to teach when we teach housing in architectural schools. The art of creating a fine environment is still a dynamic and young art. The rapid advancement of science and its potential contributions to our civilization and to our architecture are hardly being tapped. There is no staleness in our design, no static quality in our plans for living, but in order to keep our feet on the ground it is necessary to work constantly with actual problems in actual places. The architect must know for whom and with what he is designing, how much it will cost, where the money is coming from, who will do the building, who will do the living in the buildings, and how they will be managed. He must know more than that. He must know where the buildings are in the community, the economic and social status of the community, and many other things which do not appear in Vignola. How much he should know and how much he will know cannot be determined. Much will depend on his own interests and abilities. If the schools can train him to keep an open mind, to think and figure clearly, to know when to call on the advice of experts, to use his imagination wisely, and his good taste with taste, then they are doing a good job. The important thing now is to instill in the young mind an enthusiasm for an all-important new architecture in this country, an enthusiasm which may become contagious and shame some of our older architects into action and into a desire to perform a real service to their community.

Some Answers—and Some Questions

By Walter R. McCornack, Architect*

THE proper basis for the evaluation of any undertaking is to apply to the discussion of it the principle that all scientific thinking is for the purpose of determining the truth, and that all ideas or convictions are not important, no matter by whom held, when the searching light of truth shows them to be based on faulty logic, lack of courage, prejudice, or incorrect theory or data.

We must surrender our minds to the study of the Housing problem in all of its many aspects without fear of any individual or group whose views may not be based on truth, but in the desire for personal or group advantage.

The program of the United States Housing Authority is for the elimination of dwellings unfit for human occupancy and to house families whose income is not sufficient to provide them with decent housing.

There has been reported to the Housing Committee, a number of criticisms which charge that the profession has shown a lack of understanding of the housing problem.

Architecturally the problem is simple, or would be, were it not for the fact that a great chasm exists between the incomes of a great percentage of our citizens and the incomes which will make it possible for them to build or rent suitable dwellings.

It is obvious that the architects are not to blame for this situation and cannot cure it alone. As citizens, they are interested in bringing about an increase in family income, and when this is accomplished, much of our difficulty in the low rental housing field will be ended.

Housing began as a government fostered program to provide employment, and later developed considerable emotional appeal with employment still a strong factor.

Many of the advocates of housing feel that the acute need for better housing conditions warrants unqualified public support and that such matters as cost need not be given too serious consideration.

However, if we are to have a continuous slum elimination and low rental housing program, the emergency and emotional sides of the question must be set aside, for a soundly conceived long range program.

This is a vital necessity because the cost is too great to be absorbed by the vast army of ordinary taxpayers upon whose shoulders the burden of taxation for this housing must rest.

It has been costing, in many cases, $5000 per family to provide dwelling units, and it is perfectly obvious that while we are setting about the very necessary but tedious process of increasing the income of a great majority of our citizens, we must at the same time set American ingenuity and energy at work on the problem of building safe and sanitary dwellings at greatly reduced costs. So let us face the facts.

Either we apply the inventive genius of American finance and industry to the problem of supplying homes for those living in the slums at a cost at least one-half of the cost today, or we shall see the slum elimination program fail as a long range endeavor.

Having eliminated the second $800,000,000 from the U. S. H. A. program for the time being at least, it would seem appropriate to suggest that the elimination is a challenge to private endeavor for it seems outside the realm of possibility that we should turn our backs on this great social and economic problem.

There is not a city in this country which can afford, for any reason, to bring this program to a close.

What about the architects part in developing not only this particular problem but all of the corollary features of the rebuilding of our cities.

The Housing Committee of The Institute has been asked by the U. S. H. A. to study the architects' fees agreed upon last year and which apply to the projects now being carried out under the direction of the Authority, with the expressed hope that some way might be found to further reduce the fee schedule now in effect. The Committee has undertaken to gather information regarding the experience of the various architects engaged in developing various projects and to find out whether the fees paid are in fact excessive. The fee sched-

* Chairman, Committee on Housing, The American Institute of Architects.

ule now in effect is a reduction from the Standard Institute fee.

The Architects having already accepted a fee schedule which recognizes the social problems involved and having been requested to see whether or not further reductions cannot be made, feel no reservation whatever in suggesting that all elements of the cost of housing be examined with equal diligence and the questions raised in this article are for the purpose of issuing a challenge to all friends of housing to save the program by prompt and courageous action toward some of the difficulties, evils and outmoded ideas prevalent in this field today.

In spite of all of the emotional appeal and well meaning work by devoted, intelligent and loyal workers, little has been done to properly house the lower third of the people and little will be done until not only the cost of architectural service but all costs are critically and fairly examined, and means found to reduce those found excessive. The architects fee now in operation is approximately 3.5% of the total cost of the developments and even if the fee were cut in half without reducing other costs nothing worth the effort would have been accomplished. If, however, some of the restrictions, rules and accepted customs were vacated and the architects and engineers were given a free hand to reach a lower income bracket, it seems certain, that with the cooperation of industry and labor a very much lower cost level and a lower rent level would soon be reached.

Various chapters and many individuals in the profession have attempted to attack some of the many elements which are causing the high cost, but without much encouragement.

For instance, when will a really serious attack be made on the building codes? Nearly all building codes in America are detailed specifications and not regulatory statutes to guarantee safe and healthful conditions in buildings. From my own experience, it is my belief that the building codes are responsible for about 20% more cost than is necessary to provide buildings which are safe and sanitary for the intended use. Most low rental housing advocates have been strangely silent on this subject.

Another point for consideration. How much longer are we going to build expensive fireproof buildings on land costing between $25,000 and $100,000 an acre? Such land costs are typical of our best residential sections.

Land is intended for the use of man for his subsistence. Land for subsistence purposes is valued at $100 per acre or less and the prices being paid for housing sites have no foundation in use value. Some of these values are being held up by false valuations for purposes of taxation.

We attempt to overcome land cost by building elevator buildings six and eight stories in height with 25% or 30% land coverage. We thus deny the dwellers in these projects the right of constant communication with mother earth which is one of the real values in living. In a country with an almost inexhaustable area of free and open land, we are in the way of creating more slums for the future. The question of intelligent land use is receiving scant attention.

The matter of taxation should be given consideration to discover whether some different system would not be better adapted to present conditions. Full taxes assessed against low rental housing projects add between three and four dollars per month per room which is an amount about equal to what the rent should be.

Now what about rackets in the building industry, both in the contracting field and in the labor unions?

This question, until rather recently, has been greeted with deep silence or recriminations against anyone raising it.

The true friends of housing should support the program of Assistant Attorney General Thurman Arnold in his attempt to clean the racketeers out of the building industry and to return control to the honest workers.

Rackets and other practices which are prejudicial to slum clearance must be faced with courage and not permitted to be minimized and forgotten.

If we cleaned the rackets and unfair practices out of the building industry, perhaps we need not worry too much about the wage scale. Abolition of rackets, acceptance of new methods of construction, elimination of restriction on output of labor, banishing the jurisdictional disputes which breed strikes and delay, and outlawing collusion in bidding, thus permitting fair and free competition, will be a boon to the building industry and help save the housing program.

What is being done to consider the reconstruction of whole cities or at least major areas? In too

many cases the low rental housing program is more or less an isolated problem and has only casual relationship to the rest of the city in which it is located. A spot map of any city in which the slum elimination program is in progress will show plenty of evidences in support of this statement.

Generally speaking the city, county, school, library, recreation programs, and social service activities are independent one of the other and any attempt at coordination is very perfunctory.

Why must all the housing be new? Why cannot a rehabilitation study be made to see how much there is of salvage value in our cities?

Why, if we have far more land in our cities than we require for rebuilding, are there no well defined park and recreation programs being studied concurrently with the housing program?

We are spending millions in Metropolitan Park Systems and lake front schemes which are of no value to the slum dweller for the reason that he cannot afford to transport his family to these fine and very necessary recreation areas.

The interiors of our cities are in a decline, and creating open areas for recreation is a very necessary part of the job.

Why are we not, in view of the excessive costs, giving more attention to prefabrication and mass production of units of building. In this brief statement it is not possible to do more than raise questions, but here is a field which holds for the construction industry a great future. The scoffer will do well to remember that all the great inventions which have been of the greatest value to man have been first laughed to scorn.

Private enterprise, having asked for the opportunity to produce housing and having claimed that the present program is interfering with the rights of private capital, has a challenge to meet. Industry can solve the problem of the low rental dwelling unit.

What about government overhead? The answer is that it is a minor matter. We believe the architects fee to be a relatively minor matter, but if our thesis is to examine all costs, then the government's own costs should be subject to review.

What about costs? Are the savings being made by the U. S. H. A., being safe guarded for the slum dwellers or are they being consumed by other cost increases.

As a case in point, in one city two U. S. H. A. projects show a higher cost per cubic foot, a higher cost per room and per dwelling unit than a P. W. A. project in the same city. Why is this true and how generally is this true?

There has been criticism leveled at our profession because of its alleged inability to solve the housing problem.

When one realizes the work of the Architects in America, and the panorama of beautiful, useful and well constructed buildings passes in review, it is difficult to realize that the architect can be honestly and fairly blamed for the failure of Housing. The men in our profession are idealists and devoted to Architecture, and the profession declines to be saddled with more of the responsibility for failure then is the just due of any man or group of men in life, for no man is perfect and to err is human.

If an architect is held at fault in any matter, we must make sure that his critic is qualified to judge an architectural shortcoming when he sees it.

American architecture, as a whole, is better planned from the standpoint of use, better designed from the viewpoint of beauty, better constructed in all respects, and contains much of the best in engineering genius in the world today, and this is to the eternal credit of the architect and engineers of America.

It is quite obvious that any local authority using bad judgment in selecting architects and engineers, cannot in fairness blame the profession.

Some questions have been raised regarding local authorities forming bureaus to do their own architectural work.

Having been in charge of a bureau of Architecture for a Board of Education for 12 years under almost perfect conditions for operating efficiently, I can say that the only saving to be made is that which is taken from the architect, which is normally profit and a reserve fund for slack periods, and if this is justified then all forms of business and manufacture should be subjected to the same reasoning.

Architecture, like poetry, music, the drama, sculpture and painting, is an expression of the heart. No bureau of music ever would have produced Beethoven's immortal Ninth Symphony, nor would any bureau in any other of the great fields of art ever have produced a masterpiece.

If it is logical to blame the architect for short-

comings in the housing field, by what logic can one argue that placing a group of draftsmen in the hands of a housing executive, will obtain better results? The answer is that the results will be worse. It is suggested that an architect would be placed in charge, which completes the circle and further confounds the issue.

Such bureaus tend to lose in spiritual values, become political and often hopelessly inefficient.

I am quite sure the profession will welcome friendly and just criticism but it must be in more tangible form than nebulous statements which do not name names and state facts. Cases of unprofessional conduct should be referred to the local chapters of the A. I. A. and the question of poor work on the part of the architects should be a matter of frank discussion with representatives of the A. I. A. with specific cases cited. Blanket charges are without weight and are unfair.

The question is broader than the architect's compensation in his relationship to the problem. It is not a question of chiseling here a little and there a little. It is a question of taking at least $500,000 out of every million dollars proposed to be spent, and a complete overhauling of laws, codes, methods of construction, rules and regulations is strongly recommended.

The housing program will not be killed by enemies for there are no enemies of sound and sensible slum elimination. Housing will be killed by its friends if they do not re-adjust their point of view, and, while arguing that we are in a new age, continue to attempt to solve the problem with the tools of yesterday.

Architectural Service for Low Income Groups

THE professions of medicine, law and architecture, because they have to do with the health, freedom, and safety of man, have a responsibility to the public.

The medical profession has recently come to grips with government over the question of state medicine and, due to late recognition of some of the problems involved in medical care for the lowest income groups, it has a difficult problem on its hands.

Likewise the legal profession has been challenged with respect to the cost of legal services for the lowest income groups.

It is for the best interests of our democratic form of government that some satisfactory solution be found for providing medical and legal service for the low income groups, within rather than without the professions.

The profession of architecture likewise has a problem, that of safeguarding the low income family from exploitation in the housing field.

The program now being studied by a Joint Committee of The American Institute of Architects and The Producers' Council is conceived on the broad principle of reducing home building costs, providing better plans, more appropriate designs and a guarantee, in so far as it is possible, of a well constructed home. The program also contemplates a nation-wide educational program to inform the building public of the advantage of this protection.

While some architects are not interested in this type of work in their professional practice, it is most assuredly possible for *all* architects to support a trial of a program which has for its purpose the fulfillment of an obligation to the low income group, whose life savings have been and still are in jeopardy because of the lack of proper attention to their interests and welfare by the various elements in the building industry.

WALTER R. MCCORNACK, *Chairman*,
Committee on Housing, A. I. A.

Appointment at Syracuse University

Syracuse University announces the appointment of Walter A. Taylor, A.I.A., as Assistant Professor of Architecture. Professor Taylor, for many years a lecturer at Columbia, will have charge of all courses in History of Architecture and in addition will assist in Elementary Design.

F.H.A. Encourages Small House Building

A SIMPLIFIED long-term plan to finance the construction of small homes costing not in excess of $2500 has been announced by Stewart McDonald, Federal Housing Administrator.

The plan is designed primarily to aid families in the lower income groups who heretofore have been unable to take advantage of FHA financing facilities.

It will enable such families to purchase soundly constructed houses in areas that do not fully meet the requirements of other phases of the FHA program, particularly where building codes and neighborhood and zone restrictions, as well as land planning requirements, are less rigid. Its greatest use will probably be found in the smaller cities and towns and in those places where land values are relatively low.

New regulations for this program are being put into effect under the terms of Title I of the National Housing Act as amended at the last session of Congress. They will not affect operations under Title II, the major phase of the FHA program.

Home builders under the new regulations may have as long as 15 years to pay off their loans. Families with incomes ranging from $900 to $1500 annually are in a position to take advantage of the new plan. For example, on a home valued at $2000, monthly payments not including taxes and fire insurance would be less than $17 or about $4 a week.

Over 5,000 banks and other lending institutions in all parts of the country are qualified to make these loans. The lending institutions are required to pay an insurance premium charge of one-half percent per annum of the original face value of the loan to offset in part possible losses.

Administrator McDonald states, "that this plan is intended as a supplement and not as a substitute for the home ownership program in operation during the past five years under Title II of the National Housing Act. This new Title I plan is designed to afford the best available home financing facilities to families of small incomes under conditions which do not fully meet the requirements of Title II. It may also be found useful in the financing of homes and cottages in resort areas."

A National Census of Housing

OFFICIAL TEXT OF ACT APPROVED AUGUST 11, 1939

AN ACT

To provide for a national census of housing

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That to provide information concerning the number, characteristics (including utilities and equipment), and geographical distribution of dwelling structures and dwelling units in the United States the Director of the Census shall take a census of housing in each State, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Alaska, in the year 1940 in conjunction with, at the same time, and as a part of the population inquiry of the sixteenth decennial census. The Director of the Census shall be authorized to collect such supplementary statistics (either in advance of or after the taking of such census) as are necessary to the completion thereof.

SEC. 2. All of the provisions, including penalties, of the Act providing for the fifteenth and subsequent decennial censuses, approved June 18, 1929 (46 Stat. 21; U. S. C., Supp. VII, title 13, ch. 4), shall apply to the taking of the census provided for in section 1 of this Act.

SEC. 3. For the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act, there is authorized to be appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, not to exceed $8,000,000 to cover the estimated cost of such census.

Approved, August 11, 1939.

[Public—No. 385—76th Congress].

[Chapter 688—1st Session] [S. 2240].

Committee on Housing—Notice

Joint Meeting on September 24

A JOINT meeting of the Committee on Technical Aspects of Housing Administration—a committee of the National Association of Housing Officials—and the Housing Committee of The American Institute of Architects will be held on Sunday, September 24, at 8 P.M., at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington—to discuss the relation of the architects to the problem of low rental housing.

The number of the room in which the meeting will be held will be posted on the bulletin board in the hotel.

Committee on Public Information—Notice

Joint Meeting on September 28

THE Chairman of the Committee on Public Information of The Institute, William Orr Ludlow, has called a luncheon meeting, the details of which are as follows:

Those Invited: Members of the Committee, its local representatives, and all others who are interested in public information.

The Time: Thursday, Sept. 28, at 12:30 P.M.

The Place: The Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C., during the Convention of The Institute.

Further information will be available at the time of the registration.

New York State Association of Architects Convention

THE Second Annual Convention of the New York State Association of Architects will be held at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City from Monday, October 2 to Wednesday, October 4.

The time and place were suggested by the fact that the Seventy-first Convention of The Institute will take place in Washington from September 24 to 30, after which its members will visit New York and the World's Fair. The State Association will play a major part in helping to make their visit to New York an occasion long to be remembered.

The two and one half days and two evenings of the session will be crowded with both business and pleasure, starting with a cocktail party at noon on Monday at Perylon Hall at the World's Fair, followed by a formal dinner the same evening, a luncheon meeting on Tuesday and a final meeting on the morning of the fourth.

The dinner on Monday evening will be the Association's opportunity, acting as host, to welcome the visiting architects to New York State.

The dinner will be formal and ladies are especially invited. A most distinguished list of guests has been invited, including among others: Governor Lehman; Mayor LaGuardia; Grover Whalen, President of the New York World's Fair; three officers of the Comite Permanent International des Architectes, Harvey Wiley Corbett, Chairman; John A. Holabird, Vice Chairman; James Otis Post, Secretary; two officers of the Pan American Architects Union, Horacio Acosta y Lara, Montivideo, Uruguay, Chairman; Daniel Rocco, Montivideo, Uruguay, Secretary General; and the presidents of the various state and local architectural organizations.

No Association business will be taken up at the dinner meeting which will be given over to welcoming the foreign visitors, and addresses by the Governor and Mayor LaGuardia.

Business of the Association will be transacted at the luncheon meeting on Tuesday, October 3, and the clean-up meeting the next morning. All resolu-

tions to be presented at the Convention must be in the hands of Frederick G. Frost, Sr., 144 East 30th Street, N. Y. C. prior to 5:00 p. m. on Monday, October 2 so they may be passed on to the Resolutions Committee for presentation at the luncheon meeting on the third.

Tuesday, October 3 has been set aside by the Fair as *Construction Day* and a program on the theme "Building Progress in the World of Tomorrow" will be given in the morning at the Hall of Special Events. Stephen F. Voorhees, Chairman of the World's Fair Board of Design and Vice President of the New York World's Fair 1939 will preside. Other speakers will be: Colonel John P. Hogan, Robert D. Kohn, Bassett Jones and Walter Dorwin Teague.

Facilities for the purchase of dinner tickets and for registration will be found at the registration bureau at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington during the period of the A. I. A. Convention the preceding week; at the state convention headquarters in the Hotel Pennsylvania from September 30; in the office of the New York Chapter, A. I. A., 115 East 40th Street; and at Perylon Hall at the Fair on Monday, October 2.

One of the finest sights at the Fair is the evening fountain display in the Lagoon of Nations. As the joint dinner on Monday evening will interfere with a visit to the display that evening, it is suggested that all who can, visit the Fair Sunday evening for this purpose.

Although no formal guided tours have been arranged, the General Convention Chairman, C. J. White, 101 Park Avenue, and his committee, will assist any groups of architects wishing to visit particular buildings or other points of interest and will arrange for necessary introductions.

Presidents of the Association's constituent organizations should notice that all resolutions must be presented through the proper officers of these societies to the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee. All Communications on convention business should be sent to C. J. White, General Chairman, at 115 East 40th Street.

State Convention Calendar

September 30. Registration starts at Hotel Pennsylvania.

October 2. 12:00 Noon. Reception and cocktail party at Perylon Hall.
5:00 P. M. Deadline for submission of resolutions to the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee, Mr. Frederick G. Frost.
8:00 P. M. Dinner at Hotel Pennsylvania. Dinner tickets, including cocktails, $3.00. Formal. Ladies invited.

October 3. 10:00 A. M. *Construction Day* at the World's Fair. Program at Hall of Special Events.
12:00 Noon. Luncheon meeting at Hotel Pennsylvania. Business of convention to be transacted at this meeting. Tickets $1.50.

October 4. 9:30 A. M. Final "Clean-up" meeting at Hotel Pennsylvania.
Registration and sale of all tickets will take place at the Mayflower in Washington, The Hotel Pennsylvania in New York, Perylon Hall at the Fair, and at the office of the New York Chapter, A. I. A., 115 East 40th Street, N. Y. C.

Exhibition of Public Buildings

THE Supervising Architect's Office, Public Buildings Administration, has arranged an exhibition to be held during the period of the Fifteenth International Congress of Architects and the Seventy-first Convention of The American Institute of Architects from September 24 to 30, inclusive, at its offices at Seventh and D Streets, Southwest. All delegates or others attending these gatherings are invited to visit this exhibition at their convenience at any time between 8:45 A. M. and 4:00 P. M.

The exhibition will consist of photographs and drawings illustrating not only the more important

existing and contemplated buildings in Washington and elsewhere in the United States and Island possessions, including Post Offices, Custom Houses, Marine Hospitals, Coast Guard Stations, Prisons, etc., but also Post Offices and less important Federal buildings in the smaller cities.

The exhibit will illustrate through progressive steps the trends of architectural expression in the United States from the time of Robert Mills, Supervising Architect in 1840 to the so-called modernistic influences of today. It is contemplated that the winning designs in the recent national and regional competitions for public buildings will be shown.

Visitors will also be welcomed to the sample rooms of American building materials, said to be the most comprehensive and attractively displayed of any similar exhibit in the United States. These exhibits should be of great interest to both foreign and American architects visiting Washington, as furnishing a cross section of the progress that has been made during the last century in architectural design and construction methods and materials.

Plan of Washington—Exhibition

OF particular interest to the visiting delegates to the convention will be an exhibition of plans, pictures and models, illustrating the development of the National Capital from the time of its origin to the present day.

This exhibition will be held in the Art Gallery on the seventh floor of the new Interior Department Building. It has been arranged by the National Commission of Fine Arts in cooperation with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

The Plan of Washington had its origin in the L'Enfant Plan prepared under the direction of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in 1791. The original plan was enlarged in 1901 by the McMillan Park Commission in order to adapt it to the entire District of Columbia. Ever since then those plans have been the basis for the development and beautification of the Nation's Capital.

Building Code for California

THE Building Code for California, just published by the California State Chamber of Commerce for the use of municipalities, is a book which everyone interested in building should have and study. Beautifully printed, it sets a standard for future publications of similar works.

The code was produced by the Northern and the Southern California Chapters of The American Institute of Architects, the Northern and Southern sections of the California Society of Civil Engineers, the Southern chapter of the Associated General Contractors, and the Northern California Contractors Association, and is probably the only building code developed by architects, engineers, and contractors, without other agencies. A committee of each society worked out the data for the code subjects that were assigned to it, and the chairmen of the committees operated as an executive committee of six. More than two hundred meetings were held by the committees and the material originating from them was exhaustive. It was coalesced by the executive committee, and the material released by the executive committee was put into code form by the editor, Edwin Bergstrom, architect.

Public hearings were held with the producers of materials, and the Pacific Board of Fire Underwriters and many testing laboratories and building inspectors contributed to the work.

The plan of the code is simple. The first seven chapters are administrative provisions. Chapter eight consists entirely of definitions, and the many terms defined are to make clear the intentions of the code and to ensure more uniform interpretations by the enforcing bodies. Chapters nine to thirty-three contain the architectural sections, and the remaining chapters contain the engineering provisions.

The code, over ten years in its making, was revised in 1938 to bring it up to the minute, but its provisions are not intended to be static, providing as they do for the use of alternative engineering formulas, materials, methods and manners of construction, through the simple procedure of having

them critically examined and approved by technical boards, acting as examining boards and courts of appeal. It is planned, also, that a continuing technical group from the societies that framed the code will be maintained to advise the official technical boards concerning alternative materials and interpretations of the code.

It is worthy of notice that the code makes it essential that municipal employees who inspect buildings must be examined by the technical boards and certificated to inspect the parts of the construction they are found qualified to inspect. Provisions are made that architect's and engineer's superintendents may be certificated.

The code is unique in the use of tables to set out architectural provisions to an extent never before attempted. The tables give practically all the code information necessary for the designer's office, and are to be reprinted separately for that purpose. They make unnecessary the usual code classifications of buildings. Many of the provisions concerning fire protection, openings and their closures, exits, methods of determining fire hazards of buildings, and the materials of construction, are contained in the tables. All these provisions are departures from usual code provisions but are logical developments of the investigations of national committees who have worked long on these subjects. The code is far in advance of other codes in these respects.

Conscious effort has been made not to have any of the code requirements in the form of specifications.

The code has already been instrumental in reducing the prohibitive rates formerly charged for earthquake insurance, and its engineering sections, which give careful consideration to lateral forces on buildings, have been used in designing the construction of more than $100,000,000 of public buildings and schools throughout California.

The code is a most useful source of material for everyone interested in better building, and should not be overlooked by anyone engaged in the study and development of building codes.

Copies of the Building Code for California can be obtained from the California State Chamber of Commerce, 350 Bush Street, San Francisco, or 950 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, California. The price is $5.00 per copy.

College of Architecture and Design—University of Michigan

BY recent action of the Board of Regents of the University, the Department of Landscape Design, established thirty years ago in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, has been transferred to the College of Architecture with the title of Department of Landscape Architecture. The five year curriculum in this department will lead to the degree of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, following the procedure in architecture itself, where the degree is Bachelor of Architecture. The faculty of the Department of Landscape Design is transferred intact, Professor H. O. Whittemore continuing as Chairman.

In addition to its curriculum in architecture the College of Architecture has for a number of years offered degree courses in drawing, painting and general design; interior design; advertising design; stage design; and industrial design. Four-year programs in this field lead to the degree of Bachelor of Design.

In recognition of the broader scope of the work now given in the College, the title of College of Architecture marking the establishment of the school as a separate unit in 1931 is at this time changed to College of Architecture and Design. Wells Bennett is Dean of the College. All the technical work of the various courses will be given in the Architecture Building.

Cranbrook Scholarship Awards

THE Cranbrook Academy of Art, through Richard P. Raseman, Executive Secretary, announces the winners of the competition for the scholarships to study advanced architecture at the Academy, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., for 1939-40 as follows:

Vito A. Girone, Orange, New Jersey.
James M. Berkey, Spokane, Washington.
Sanford B. Wells, Schenectady, New York.

With The Chapters

NEWS NOTES FROM CHAPTER SECRETARIES

Detroit.

Arthur K. Hyde, President, Detroit Chapter of The American Institute of Architects, has announced the appointment of his nominating committee to name candidates to serve on the Chapter Executive Committee during the coming year. James A. Spence of Saginaw is chairman; George M. McConkey of Ann Arbor and C. William Palmer of Detroit are members.

The Chapter's Board of Directors has elected another committee to prepare a second slate. They are John C. Thornton of Detroit (Chairman), Henry F. Stanton of Detroit and William D. Cuthbert of Ann Arbor.

The two committees will prepare separate slates of officers and directors to be voted upon at the Chapter Annual Meeting on October 18th.

The next meeting of the Chapter will be a pre-convention meeting on September 7th for the purpose of electing delegates and alternates to the A.I.A. Convention in Washington, Sept. 24 to 30.

TALMAGE C. HUGHES, *Secretary*

Southern California.

The activities of this Chapter, for the past few months, have centered about two subjects: Publicity and Legislation. With an active Professional Betterment Committee and an equally active Legislative Committee at work, the air has been full of bills and programs. While there are not definite results to be reported as yet, it is hoped that the new Architectural Practice Act will soon emerge from the Legislature. It is also hoped that the Chapter may take some step, however small, in the direction of a professional publicity program.

The Committee on Public Works reports it has been in frequent conference with the officials of both City and County, in the study of the development of the Los Angeles Civic Center. It is gratifying to the Chapter to learn that the advice of this Committee is being sought in the solution of problems peculiarly architectural in their nature.

The Traveling Exhibit of 1937 Residential Honor Awards has been in almost constant use, both in Los Angeles and out-lying cities. The 1938 Honor Awards Exhibit, composed of non-residential architecture, has been exhibited at the Public Library and is now available for use by schools, libraries and other institutions. Both of these exhibits are maintained by the Chapter as a means of acquainting the public with work which has been recognized by the profession for its excellence.

Through the efforts of the Committee on Education, lectures by Lazlo Moholy-Nagy of the Chicago School of Design, and Alvar Aalto, Architect of Finland, have been sponsored by the Chapter. Both of these lectures were well attended.

Chapter members had an opportunity to inspect the new Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal at the May meeting, which was held in the station dining room. Brief talks were given by the consulting architect, Donald B. Parkinson, a member of this Chapter, Tommy Tomson, landscape architect, and others, during a tour of the station following dinner.

In line with its policy of maintaining a close relationship with the Producers' Council, plans have been made for a joint meeting of the Chapter and the Producers' Council Club of Southern California, to be held in July.

BEN H. O'CONNOR, *Secretary*

Necrology—Members

As reported to The Institute from July 20 to September 7, 1939.

Fellow.

Hewitt, Edwin Hawley

Honorary Corresponding Member

Letrosne, Charles

Members.

Couch, Lester S.
Crisp, Herbert G.
Deming, William I.
Skilling, Warren Porter
Wallace, Joe T.
Walther, John P.
Pope, Hyrum C.

Membership Composition
of
The American Institute of Architects

AS OF SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

	Total
Corporate Members	2,969
State Association Members:	
(*Totals shown are non-Institute members*)	
State Association of California Architects	628
Michigan Society of Architects	221
The State Association of Wisconsin Architects	123
Architects Society of Ohio	148
Association of Kentucky Architects	37
Honorary Members	81
Honorary Corresponding Members	47
Juniors of The Institute (*Class discontinued*)	12
Chapter Associates*	559
Junior Associates*	84
Student Associates*	9
Total	4,918

* As per annual chapter reports of January 1, 1939.